

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GENEVA 00940 01 OF 02 100800Z
ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 EA-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 DPW-01 SCS-03 SCA-01 ORM-02 AID-05 TRSE-00
OMB-01 AGRE-00 EB-08 EUR-12 /101 W
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FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5096

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GENEVA 940

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ICRC VN
SUBJECT: ICRC OPERATIONS DIRECTOR'S TRIP TO VIETNAM

1. THE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC), JEAN PIERRE HOCKE, HAS JUST RETURNED TO GENEVA FROM A TEN-DAY TRIP TO NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN VIETNAM (JANUARY 10 TO 21), FOLLOWING WHICH HE VISITED SEVERAL OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE FAR EAST AND EUROPE. IN LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH MISOFF, FEBRUARY 8, HE MADE THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING HIS STAY IN VIETNAM. (PLEASE PROTECT.)

2. U.S. DEPENDENTS IN VIETNAM -- HOCKE STATED THAT HE HAD SPOKEN ON THE SUBJECT OF THE DEPARTURE OF AN ESTIMATED 150 AMERICAN DEPENDENTS REMAINING IN VIETNAM (INCLUDING WIVES, CHILDREN AND FIANCEES) TO THE VIETNAMESE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, AND TO THE PRESIDENT AND VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE VIETNAMESE RED CROSS SOCIETY, ASKING THAT THIS MATTER BE CONSIDERED COMPLETELY OUTSIDE THE CONTEXT OF U.S.-VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT RELATIONS. HE WAS ENCOURAGED THAT NONE OF HIS VIETNAMESE INTERLOCUTERS REJECTED THIS SUGGESTION BUT RATHER SAID THEY WOULD CONSIDER AND DISCUSS IT AND SEE WHAT MIGHT BE DONE. HE EXPECTS TO RECEIVE SOME SIGNAL FROM THEM IN THE NEAR FUTURE, EITHER THROUGH THE
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PAGE 02 GENEVA 00940 01 OF 02 100800Z

ICRC DELEGATION IN HANOI OR DIRECTLY FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE VIETNAMESE RED CROSS SOCIETY (NAM) IN THE COURSE OF A RED CROSS CONFERENCE SCHEDULED FOR NEW DELHI IN MARCH. HOCKE URGED THAT, IN VIEW OF HIS PLEA TO THE VIETNAMESE THAT THE ISSUE OF DEPENDENTS BE TREATED APART FROM GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS, ALL CONTACTS ON THIS SUBJECT BE HANDLED EXCLUSIVELY IN RED CROSS OR OTHER PRIVATE CHANNELS.

IN RESPONSE TO MISOFF QUERY CONCERNING REPORTS THAT CHILDREN IDENTIFIED AS AMERICAN DEPENDENTS HAD BEEN OBSERVED BEGGING IN SAIGON STREETS, HOCKE SAID HE HAD SEEN NO EVIDENCE OF THIS WHATEVER AND INDEED NO ONE BEGGING IN THE STREETS DURING THIS VISIT. HE ALSO SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD NOTHING CONCERNING U.S. PRISONERS, INCLUDING SPECIFICALLY TUCKER GOUGELMANN.

3. VIETNAMESE WISHING TO RETURN -- HOCKE SPOKE TO DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ON THIS SUBJECT AND ENCOUNTERED A STONE WALL. DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, WHO MENTIONED UP TO 100,000 VIETNAMESE WISHING TO RETURN FROM ABROAD, SAID THERE WAS STILL NO INTEREST ON THE PART OF HIS GOVERNMENT, WHICH WAS PRE-OCCUPIED WITH OTHER, MORE URGENT MATTERS. IT WOULD HAVE TO BE DEFERRED UNTIL LATER, "MAYBE A YEAR, TWO OR THREE."

4. FOREIGNERS WISHING TO LEAVE VIETNAM -- HOCKE SAID CIRC WOULD BE OCCUPIED FOR SOME TIME TO COME IN EFFECTING THE DEPARTURE OF THOSE FOREIGN NATIONALS REMAINING IN VIETNAM WHO WISH TO DEPART. THE GREATEST NUMBER OF THESE ARE CHINESE WITH TAIWANESE DOCUMENTATION WITH SOME FRENCH PASSPORT-HOLDERS, JAPANESE, KOREANS, YEMENI, AND INDIANS. LATTER ARE, HOWEVER, CONSIDERED THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INDIAN MISSION IN HANOI. AMONG THE KOREANS ARE THE THREE DETAINED DIPLOMATS WHO, HOCKE WAS TOLLD, WILL BE PERMITTED TO GO AFTER REVIEW AND CLEARANCE OF THEIR PAST RECORDS BY VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES. CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 GENEVA 00940 01 OF 02 100800Z

IN THIS REGARD, HE URGED THAT NO PRESSURE, PUBLICITY OR OVERTURES BE MOUNTED, IN ORDER THAT THE VIETNAMESE MIGHT BE FREE TO RELEASE THE TRIO IN THEIR OWN GOOD TIME WITHOUT ANY RISK OF LOSS OF FACE. HE VENTURED THAT THEY WOULD SHOW UP ANNOUNCED IN BANGKOK ONE DAY ON WEEKLY AIR FRANCE FLIGHT. HOCKE ALSO STATED THAT VIETNAMESE ARE CONCERNED OVER LARGE NUMBERS OF ETHNIC CHINESE CAMBODIANS WHO HAVE MOVED FROM BORDER TO SETTLE IN CHOLON SECTOR OF SAIGON. HE GAVE HIS IMPRESSION THAT VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO HAVE THESE, AS WELL AS OTHER CHINESE, DEPART VIETNAM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, IN VIEW OF POPULATION AND FOOD PRESSURES, IF THERE WERE GRACEFUL WAY OF DOING SO.

5. SAIGON -- HOCKE REPORTED THAT SAIGON'S POPULATION HAS NOW DROPPED TO ABOUT 3.5 MILLION FROM A HIGH POINT OF 4.5 MILLION, AND VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT PLANNING IS FOR 2.0 MILLION BY THE END OF 1978. HOCKE DOUBTS, HOWEVER, THAT THIS LATTER GOAL WILL BE ACHIEVED. HE SAID

THAT THE CITY WAS STRIKINGLY QUIETER, WITH FAR FEWER CARS CIRCULATING AND SMALL INDUSTRIES OPERATING THAN HE HAD NOTED DURING HIS LAST VISIT SEVERAL MONTHS BEFORE. (ONE RESULTANT SIDE BENEFIT: A POLLUTION-FREE ATMOSPHERE.) OBSERVING THE EVIDENT PROBLEMS OF THE POPULACE IN ADJUSTING TO NEW LIFE STYLES UNDER THE NORTHERN GOVERNMENT, HOCKE FELT THAT, PERHAPS FOR THE FIRST TIME, HANOI WAS WORKING UNDER HEAVY TIME PRESSURES -- TO EFFECTIVELY AND RAPIDLY INTEGRATE THE SOUTH, AND SAIGON, INTO THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE.

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PAGE 01 GENEVA 00940 02 OF 02 100821Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GENEVA 940

6. FOOD SITUATION -- WITH MASSIVE RICE IMPORTS CUT-OFF, THE FOOD SITUATION, ESPECIALLY IN THE SOUTH, IS SERIOUS. THE NORTH, WITH 80 PERCENT OF ITS AREA UNDER CULTIVATION AND EXTENSIVE IRRIGATION, PRODUCES TWO OR THREE CROPS PER YEAR AND HAS NO REAL PROBLEM IN FEEDING ITS POPULATION ADEQUATELY. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SOUTH HAS ONLY 20 PERCENT OF ITS AREA UNDER CULTIVATION, LITTLE IRRIGATION AND ONLY ONE CROP PER YEAR, AND IS IN SERIOUS DIFFICULTY. INDIVIDUAL RATIONS OF RICE ARE NOW DOWN TO FOUR TO FIVE KILOS PER MONTH IN THE SOUTH FROM NINE KILOS A SHORT TIME AGO, AND A NORM OF TWELVE TO FIFTEEN KILOS PER MONTH. ALTHOUGH HE SAW NO EVIDENCE OF ACTUAL STARVATION IN THE AREA, HOCKE CONSIDERED THE SITUATION PARTICULARLY GRIM. WHILE THE SOVIETS ARE PREPARED TO SELL OR BARTER RICE TO THE VIETNAMESE, THE LATTER HAVE VERY LITTLE FOREIGN EXCHANGE AND FEW PRODUCTS FOR EXPORT. ON HIS RETURN FROM VIETNAM, HOCKE STOPPED IN JAPAN AND SOME UNSPECIFIED EUROPEAN COMMUNITY COUNTRIES TO INQUIRE INTO POSSIBILITIES OF FOOD ASSISTANCE. HE

JUDGED THAT RURAL RESETTLEMENT AND CONSTRUCTION OF
IRRIGATION SYSTEMS SUFFICIENT TO ATTAIN CROP SELF-
SUFFICIENCY IN THE SOUTH WOULD TAKE UP TO THREE YEARS.

7. ICRC PROGRAM FOR VIETNAM -- ICRC'S PROGRAM FOR 1977 IN
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PAGE 02 GENEVA 00940 02 OF 02 100821Z

VIETNAM IS ON THE ORDER OF \$7.5 MILLION, DIRECTED
MOSTLY TO THE SUPPLY OF MEDICAMENTS AND CHEMICALS FOR
PRODUCING MEDICINES IN VIETNAMESE FACTORIES. ICRC HOPES
TO FINANCE THIS PROGRAM FROM FUNDS REMAINING FROM PREVIOUS
APPEALS WITH POSSIBLY SOME HELP FROM NATIONAL SOCIETIES.
ALTHOUGH IT MIGHT HANDLE SOME 10 TO 20,000 TONS OF FOOD
ASSISTANCE IF DONORS ARE FORTHCOMING, IT WOULD NOT BE
PREPARED TO ADMINISTER ANY LARGE SCALE FOOD SUBSISTENCE
PROGRAM.
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